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C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 005793

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [CO](#)
SUBJECT: GOC-ELN CIVIL SOCIETY GUARANTORS REPORT NORWEGIAN
INTEREST IN ELN MEETING

REF: BOGOTA 5496

Classified By: DCM Milton K. Drucker
Reason: 1.4 (b,d)

Summary

¶1. (C) GOC-ELN civil society guarantors Moritz Akerman and Alvaro Jimenez said Norway wants a direct meeting with ELN military commander and negotiator Antonio Garcia. Norway would characterize to Garcia as unrealistic the ELN's proposal that Norway finance the ELN's proposed cease-fire and release of hostages with significant cash sums. Instead, the Norwegians would seek ELN, GOC and international community support for in-kind contributions to the ELN during a cease-fire. The guarantors said Peace Commissioner Luis Carlos Restrepo would approve the Norway-ELN meeting if the ELN sought his permission and said its purpose was to discuss cease-fire and hostage release issues. End summary.

Norwegians Skeptical of ELN Finance Proposal

¶2. (C) Akerman told us on June 27 that during recent meetings in Oslo, Norwegian MFA representative Johan Vibe expressed Norway's interest in playing a positive role in GOC-ELN peace talks, but was not sympathetic to the ELN's request that Norway finance the guerrilla group's proposed cease-fire and release of hostages with up to USD 18 million (reftel). Vibe declined to comment to the guarantors on the amount the ELN had requested, instead laying out some general peace process guidelines. According to Akerman, Vibe said no democratic government could give money to an organization on terrorist lists, like the ELN. However, he said it might be possible to supply material goods to such an organization (food, medicine, etc) as part of a peace process, with the authorization of the GOC and with the approval of the international community. The question of when to deliver such material support would depend on the progress of the talks, Vibe suggested.

Norwegians Want to Meet ELN

¶3. (C) Akerman called Restrepo from Oslo to brief him on the

Vibe meeting. He told Restrepo the Norwegians were interested in meeting directly with ELN military commander and negotiator Antonio Garcia, perhaps in Caracas. According to Akerman, Restrepo was not opposed to the meeting, as long as the ELN asked permission from Restrepo and said explicitly that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss cease-fire and release of hostages. Akerman said the ELN's response to Restrepo's request would be a test of its commitment to the process.

Guarantors Characterize ELN as Defeated

¶4. (C) Akerman and Vargas said the ELN is a defeated organization that is looking for "dignity" through the peace process. Akerman said Garcia asked for money from the Norwegians in part to fund ELN troops' needs, and in part to provide for "contingencies" and secure the personal financial futures of key ELN leaders. In the guarantors' view, the ELN is not looking to intensify its guerrilla activities by obtaining funds from Norway. They also said civil society organizations are putting pressure on the ELN, saying the country cannot tolerate continued conflict.

Briefing Request from Felipe Gonzalez

¶5. (C) Akerman reported that former Spanish Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez had asked the guarantors for a briefing in Cartagena, where he is currently participating in meetings associated with his foundation. The guarantors intended to seek Restrepo's permission before going ahead. (Gonzalez was one of the high profile political figures the ELN had previously asked to become involved in the talks, but Gonzalez expressed reluctance in the absence of an ELN cease-fire. The guarantors understand that Gonzalez wanted to remain informed but was not seeking to insert himself into the process.)

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